

**FOR
CREATIVE
PHOTOGRAPHERS
ONLY...**



**A LITTLE HEALTHY
COMPETITION**

National Public Health Week

What Is Public Health?

Public health is a sophisticated system of people and services dedicated to preserving and improving the health of our Nation by promoting physical and mental health and preventing disease, injury, and disability. Primarily through the achievements of public health, Americans today can expect to live more than 30 extra years on average than their ancestors born at the turn of the century.

Using population-based strategies for disease and injury prevention, public health has contributed to declines in illness and injury, including heart disease and stroke, smoking-related diseases, infectious disease, and motor vehicle and workplace injuries. Success stories include the elimination of polio, addition of fluoride to community water supplies contributing to declines in tooth decay, and reductions in childhood blood lead levels. Public health also serves as our first line of defense against new health threats such as AIDS, Lyme disease, and drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis; focuses on such fundamental concerns as clean water and safe food supplies; and identifies and addresses health problems resulting from high-risk behaviors including unintended teen pregnancies, violence, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Public health touches the lives of all Americans every day in a myriad of important ways. Yet, studies show that most Americans do not understand what public health is or appreciate its value to their health and well-being.

Public Health Photography Contest

Pictures are an excellent way to bring public health to life for people. Public health photographs can tell a story, illustrate people helping people, capture dramatic situations, create images of healthy communities, and demonstrate everyday occasions made safer by public health. Through a national photography contest, the National Public Health Week Steering Committee is asking for your help in capturing, through photography, the wide range of services and achievements of public health so that Americans can better understand the important role public health plays in their lives. This leaflet provides additional information about public health to help you identify great photo opportunities.

The Public Health Steering Committee greatly appreciates the generous support of Colgate-Palmolive Company, HumanSoft, LLC, and Turning Point in making this National Photography Contest possible.

Public Health:

Prevents Epidemics and the Spread of Disease

Striving to achieve an epidemic-free nation, public health plays a critical role in monitoring and responding to outbreaks of infectious diseases by:

- implementing vaccination programs for measles, mumps, diphtheria, polio, and other diseases;
- identifying emerging diseases such as Hantavirus and drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis, determining those affected

and their contacts, and supervising treatment for them;

- keeping our blood supply safe through heating and donor testing techniques;
- analyzing patterns of HIV infection and AIDS distribution in the population and educating the public on how to prevent them.

Promotes Environmental Health

Public health aggressively works to ensure a safe and clean environment for our nation by:

- collecting and studying data on accidental overdoses by children of iron-containing supplements;
 - gathering and examining statistics on carbon monoxide and lead poisoning, the latter resulting in the virtual removal of lead from petroleum and paint;
 - supporting lead poisoning screening for children, ensuring medical care for those affected, and taking steps to remove lead from their environments;
 - testing for potential adverse health effects from exposure to environmental toxins such as plutonium waste and radioactive iodine;
 - informing the public about health risks from contaminated food, water, and air;
 - researching the health risks of environmental tobacco smoke and providing communities with possible ways to combat it.
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Prevents Injuries

Injury is the leading cause of death for children and young adults and the third leading cause of death in this country. Public health reduces the incidence, severity, and adverse outcomes of injury by:

- supporting research and training to control, minimize, and prevent injuries such as falls, automobile injuries, homicides, and suicides;
- promoting the use of safety belts and child safety seats;
- teaming with medical care and highway experts to encourage seat belt use, reduce drunk driving, and improve medical services;
- promoting bicycle safety through school programs and the distribution of free helmets;
- identifying occupational hazards and creating safer work, school, home, and transportation environments through education programs;
- advocating playground safety by recommending specifications for construction equipment as well as age requirements and surface materials to prevent severe injuries;
- encouraging the use of protective gear to prevent wrist, elbow, knee, and head injuries during in-line skating.

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Promotes and Encourages Healthy Behaviors

Public health plays a key role in informing communities of health risks by:

- promoting exercise and good nutrition to reduce chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, and cancer;
- creating educational programs on health risks resulting from smoking;
- educating teens about the dangers of smoking and unprotected sex;
- researching and distributing information on the hazards of alcohol abuse;
- advocating the use of condoms to prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS and avoiding unintended pregnancies.

Responds to Disasters and Assists Communities in Recovery

Public health assists communities during natural and man-made disasters by:

- responding to health needs such as assessing medical care availability and testing food and water for contamination in the aftermath of floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes;
- issuing warnings through public safety messages;

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- working with State and local governments to enhance readiness of metropolitan area medical strike teams to respond to acts of terrorism;
 - conducting long-term studies on how disasters affect mental and physical health;
 - providing counseling for affected victims and their families.

Ensures the Quality and Accessibility of Health Services

Public health seeks to achieve a high standard of quality of medical care.

It does so by:

- collecting data on health outcomes of services provided by nursing homes, hospitals, and other medical institutions and recommending needed changes;
- surveying medical facilities to ensure that they are complying with cleanliness and sanitary requirements;
- assisting hard-to-reach populations with clinical services such as immunizations, check-ups, prenatal care, mammography, and cholesterol screening;
- referring high-risk pregnancies to specialists for advanced care;
- regulating laboratory standards to ensure high-quality and accurate results of tests such as Pap smears, blood cholesterol screenings, and mammograms.

Strives to Achieve Healthy Communities of Healthy People

Our nation will continue to experience enormous progress in the prevention, awareness, and treatment of health concerns because public health is constantly:

- identifying and solving community health problems;
- developing policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts;
- enforcing laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety;
- evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and community health services;
- researching innovative solutions to health problems.



Sponsored by the National Public Health Week
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